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Female Teachers and Barriers of Participatory Management

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Abstract

Participatory management (PM) increases productivity, competitive advantage, improves performance and satisfaction. Therefore identifying the barriers of PM is important. The sample for this study consisted of 903 female teachers randomly drawn from schools in seven big districts in Mashhad, Iran. The teachers expressed fear that their effective involvement in PM will lead to changes in the organization of work that are not to their benefit such as increased workloads or even loss of jobs. Shift to PM is seen as a way for an organization to build key capabilities essential for success in a complicated and dynamic environment.

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1. Introduction

Today teachers are more educated, motivated, responsible, and capable of doing their jobs without being closely supervised (Gono, 2001). Participatory approaches, enhances the levels of trust within the school community to attain educational benefits (Blase & Blase, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Oosthuizen and Du Toit (1999) asserted that PM can be defined as a system engaging employees as willing co-producers of a better future. For Gono (2001), a style is the PM main character, under which managers have complete trust in subordinates, and much of the decision-making is made through group participation. In short, PM is a process where subordinates share significant degree of decision-making power with their immediate superiors. As for Kim (2002), PM is a process in which influence is shared among individuals who are otherwise hierarchically unequal. It also incorporates various employees' involvement schemes in co-determination of working conditions, problem-solving, and decision-making. In a PM system, the degree to which a person participates will have a positive effect on their level of individual performance and satisfaction.

PM attempts to involve teachers toward meaningful involvement (Waters et al., 2003). The unique feature of PM is that organizational objectives and implementation strategies originate from a group process (Gerry, 1979). PM is widely perceived as an attribute of socially responsible organizations with participation in decision making at the workplace seen as central to the democratic vision and basic to the good of society (Greenberg, 1986).

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1.1. Benefit of participatory management

-Through a wise use of PM, leaders may possibly make sound decisions by drawing upon collective expertise, experience, and wisdom of their employees (Lichtenstein, 2000);

-In individual members of a group, participation creates a sense of belonging resulting in more cooperation and endeavor to attain the group objectives;

-Individuals who have a sense of belonging in a group are more willing to co-operate towards accomplishing common decisions. However, participation is not dependent on individual physical appearance but rather on her/his mental involvements;

-Helps in gaining people's trust and influences group decision-makings positively;

-The manager will also be able to form groups of people with different potentials if she/he does not divide the employees into groups based on their abilities - the stronger are separated from the weak.

In addition to satisfying hierarchical needs of individuals, PM has other benefits to the individual as well as to the department. These advantages include:

1)Increased productivity 2)Better problem definition, greater range of alternatives, and better understanding of adverse consequences 3)Greater commitment to the task, the team, and the organization 4)Increased cooperation with members of management and staff 5)Reduced turnover and absenteeism 6)Individual growth opportunities increase from sharing of knowledge 7)Higher trust level 8)Reduced complaints and grievances 9)Greater acceptance of changes 10)Decreased organization politics.

PM May positively impact on the followings:

- 1) Job satisfaction (Kim, 2002);
- 2) Organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Van Yperen *et al.*, 1999);
- 3) Perceived organizational support (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Lau & Lim, 2002);
- 4) Organizational citizenship behavior (Van Yperen *et al.*, 1999);
- 5) Labour-management relations (Ospina, & Yaroni 2003); and
- 6) Job performance (Lau & Lim, 2002).

1.2. Barriers of participatory management

Barriers of PM are usually of three types: controllable, uncontrollable and capable of being influenced. Controllable factors may include inadequate time with employees as well as lack of training and interest on the part of employees. Uncontrollable factors may be the reputation of the department, structure of media services, and the area of service within the organization. Barriers you can influence may be lack of knowledge in PM by a supervisor, organizational climate that is not conducive to PM, and a supervisor who is unwilling to spend the time to practice PM. The following list shows the possible barriers to PM (Schmid, 1980).

2. Sample and methodology of research

The sample for the study consisted of 903 teachers randomly drawn from female teachers in seven big districts in Mashhad, Iran. Previous research has shown that female high schools perform better than male high schools. The instrument used in this survey study were postal questionnaires consisting of 13 items for obtaining information about the barriers to PM. Descriptive statistics and correlation were utilized in this study. Accordingly, Pearson's product moment correlation was used in the data analysis. A t-test for one statistics sample was made to examine the deviation of barriers of PM with respect to the desired situation.

3. Findings

Table 1 shows the overall results for mean values of the barriers to PM in the seven Districts of female government high schools in Mashhad including the minimum and maximum values and standard deviation values.

Table 1. Mean value of the constraints in implementing PM in seven districts in Mashhad

	Count	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Standard Deviation
Barriers of PM	903	46.44	0.00	100.0	20.62
District I	156	46.6	.0	100.0	21.9
District II	153	45.9	.0	82.7	20.7
District III	62	51.3	.0	89.6	21.1
District IV	154	45.9	.0	90.4	20.0
District V	107	44.2	.0	92.3	19.0
District VI	113	47.0	.0	90.4	20.2
District VII	158	46.5	.0	90.4	21.1

Based on the results in Table 1, overall mean score of the barriers to PM (from the maximum score of 100) was 46.44, and the standard deviation value was 20.62. This means that there was not a significant level of the barriers to PM in female government high schools in Mashhad districts. In fact, this situation was the same for all the seven districts. The result also shows that Districts III has high mean value i.e. 51.3. On the other hand, Districts V has a low mean value of 44.2. The value of the standard deviation for District I was the highest, meaning that the greatest disagreement was among the teachers in District I in answering the survey questionnaires, and the teachers in District V had more agreement about the barriers to PM. Based on Figure 1, all the mean scores were less than 52, the highest for District III and the lowest for District V. Therefore, this indicates that the barriers to PM were not high or at a favourable level among teachers in school management.

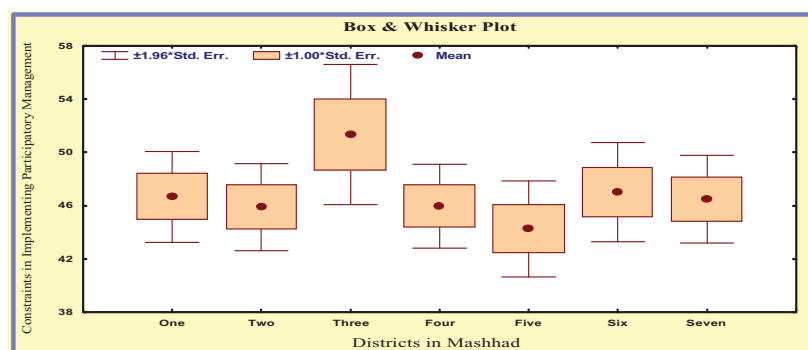


Figure 1. Box-plot comparisons of the scores distribution of the barriers to PM in seven districts in Mashhad.

The teachers expressed that there were many barriers to PM in high schools and they are as follow:

1-Lack of a formalized document cause the teams to operate under informal practices that do not promote trust and limit their effectiveness as decision makers, consequently the school head retains the sole authority to endorse or reject a teacher's recommendation.

2-Time constraints and technical decisions make teachers unable to attend team meetings.

3-Employee barriers exist when non-managerial staff resists involvement in PM due to the lack of an organizational climate supportive of employee participation.

The teachers expressed there were not many barriers to PM in high schools as follows:

1-fear that their effective involvement in PM will lead to changes in the organization of work that are not to their benefit such as increased workloads or even loss of jobs.

2-The school head views PM as a quick fix solution, underestimating the complexity of shared decision making that inevitably results in the discouragement of teachers.

3-Little or no training is provided for the teachers when making the transition to a PM governance structure.

4. Implication and Conclusion

The shift into PM in workplace is inevitable and necessary. It is inevitable due to the fact that capacity in participation is widespread and becoming more so. It is necessary because the issues which are prevalent in the workplace are too complex and interdependent to be solved by the few persons in authority. The principals' readiness to utilize participative approaches to decision-making is mainly out of pragmatic motives in achieving valued organizational results. Principals tended to involve teachers more in technical domain than in managerial domain mostly by using consultative participation approaches, and they preferred to include teachers based on their motivation rather than their expertise (Somech, 2002). Findings of the study can be used in assisting managers in obtaining the suitable styles in guiding and developing human resource. In addition it can be used to make some changes to the management process and improve organizational performance. This study suggests that the application of PM would help to better achieve organizational goals.

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